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WASHINGTON (CNS) -- A U.S. government commission has recommended that President Barack Obama's administration place Venezuela and Cuba among the countries that should be monitored closely for their violations of religious freedom. In its annual report, released May 1 in Washington, the **U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom** also recommended that 13 countries -- including Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China and Pakistan -- be designated as "countries of particular concern." This designation is reserved for countries with the most egregious violations of religious freedom and for governments that tolerate such abuses.